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ABSTRACT

Since many first line managers (FLMs) have not participated in formal learning, how they make sense of their roles and the training they are doing is significant. A relationship between inadequate literacy skills and ability to do a job is assumed. Language, literacy, and numeracy must be understood in terms of social practice and creation of social identities. Important to this view is how power and knowledge are used to construct social identities and social practice. Discourse (a set of related social practices that includes interacting, speaking, writing, reading, and valuing a particular social identity) is an important concept in broadening the view of language and literacy. The new work order of fast capitalism has changed organizations. Competencies FLMs need to fulfill their changing role have been identified and provide a starting point to view construction of a fast capitalist discourse of first line management. FLMs' opinions on what training would be helpful in the workplace, how it would help in the job, and what would be different as a result of training have been used to identify social practices FLMs construct in forming their own social identities in the discourse of first line management. Data suggest FLMs' current social practice in the discourse of the work area is determined by downsizing and the casualization of the work force, compliance with government legislation, and satisfying the productivity outcomes of the organization. Training can give participants the opportunity to identify literacies they need to operate in the discourse. (Contains 10 references.) (YLB)

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Keeping the bosses off my back: power and knowledge in first line management discourse

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First line managers, as their name implies, are employees' first point of contact with the hierarchy of an organisation. Traditionally, first line managers gained this position through their experience and expertise on the job. Their career pathway in an organisation was developed by getting their work areas to meet production quotas and studying Management Certificates part time at technical and further education (TAFE) colleges. The entry level TAFE certificate is Certificate IV in First Line Management. Many of the blue collared participants who embarked on this certificate had never undertaken formal qualifications.

The Federal government's attention was drawn to the education of first line managers by the publication of *Enterprising nation: renewing Australia's managers to meet the challenges of Asia-Pacific century*. This document is usually referred to as the Karpin Report. A key finding of the Karpin Report was:

> Front line Managers [first line managers] have the most immediate impact on productivity and quality output of the work force ... [but] the majority of them are not being prepared for the [future] challenges. (Sheldrake and Saul 1995, p 33)

The significance of the Karpin Report was to expand the national training reform agenda to incorporate the education and training of managers within organisations. The Frontline Management Initiative was born. This instigated workplace learning methodology to develop management skills within organisations. Another Federal and State government response was to encourage organisations to train and develop their first line managers by giving them financial incentives through traineeships. A traineeship allows a first line manager to gain access to training within his/her organisation. Many first line managers have not participated in formal training, hence I was interested in how they made sense of their roles and the training they were doing.

Purpose

My original research interest was to study the language, literacy and numeracy skills needed by trainee first line managers. However, isolating language, literacy and numeracy as discrete units of knowledge without a context creates a deficit model. This model creates the view that language, literacy and numeracy at work is purely a set of individual skills necessary to perform a particular task. It reinforces the assumption that there exists a relationship between inadequate literacy skills and people's abilities to do their jobs (Castleton 1999, p 11). The purpose of this paper is to offer a broader view of language, literacy and numeracy. Language, literacy and numeracy needs to be understood in terms of social practice and the creation of social identities (Gee et al 1996, p 4). Important to this view is how power and knowledge are used to construct social identities and social practice.

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Theoretical background to this paper

Social practice

The concept of social practice places language, literacy and numeracy within social and cultural contexts. Social practices are embodied in the way people, talk, listen, read, write and hold certain values, attitudes and beliefs about the world (Gee 2000, p 1). People create social identities about the way they live and work through social practice.

Discourse

Another important concept in broadening the view of language and literacy is Discourse. A Discourse is a set of related social practices that includes ways of interacting, listening, speaking, reading, writing and valuing a particular social identity. Gee et al (1996, p 10) use Discourse with a capital D to distinguish it from 'discourse', which means a 'stretch of spoken or written language'. A Discourse is shaped and constrained by social structures, such as education, law and workplaces. It also constructs 'social identities'; relationships between people, and systems of knowledge and beliefs (Joliffe, p 340). Knowledge is knowing the social practices defined by the Discourse, while power is knowing how to use the social practices constructed by the Discourse.

Power and knowledge are not separate from Discourse; they are intertwined and can be used to comply with the Discourse or resist it (Kendall and Wickham 1999, p 51). How power and knowledge is used becomes important when constructing social identities within the Discourse. Power and knowledge is embedded within the social practice. Being 'literate' is being able to use your knowledge of social practices to be part of the social identity defined by the Discourse. I provide examples of this later in this paper when I look at the Discourse of fast capitalism and first line management. It is important to remember that people are not confined to one particular Discourse; there are many ways to operate in society. Each Discourse has its social practice and its literacies. People operate in more than one Discourse at a time. In other words there are multiple literacies.

The Discourse of fast capitalism

Before looking at fast capitalism let us identify the key features of the old work order, or as Cope and Kalantzis (1997, p 28) described, the concept of 'Fordism'. The Fordist organisation used 'mass production' to produce vast qualities of manufactured items, and unskilled or semi-skilled workers to produce them. The management structure was bureaucratic and hierarchical within these organisations (Cope and Kalantzis 1997). Knowledge and skills were broken into bits and pieces. Production workers only knew the tasks required to do their job, not the reasons why their job was important. In this structure, a work area was an isolated community of practice lead by a supervisor. Only senior management knew the whole picture of the organisation (Gee 2000, p 4).

The nature of work has changed. The new work order of fast capitalism has changed organisations.

Gee (2000, p 6) identifies the key features of fast capitalism as:

- The continual emphasis on the flexible transformation of people, practices, markets and institutions.

- Crossing and destroying borders between people, practices and institutions.

- The creation of a seamless organisation where people are aware of whole process, not just bits and pieces.

The organisation becomes a whole community of social practices. These concepts can be expanded and applied to manufacturing industry by studying the work of Gee et al (1996), who identify the Discourse of fast capitalism in *The new work order: behind the language of the new capitalism*. Gee et al (1996, p 6) identify that this new capitalism is based on the design, production and marketing of 'high' quality goods and services to saturated markets. In order to survive, the developed world has to produce perfect goods and services to 'niche' markets. Fast capitalist texts place 'the customer' as the primary concern of the organisation.

The basis of the Discourse of fast capitalism is the concept of quality put forward by USA quality gurus like W Demming. Striving towards, and maintaining, International Standard Organisation 9000 Quality Standard endorsement has been embraced by manufacturing organisations who want to compete in the global market. This concept places the emphasis on satisfying the customers' needs. 'Serving the customer' becomes the focus of the whole organisation. 'Total Quality Control' and the creation of a quality system enables workers to make decisions on what goods and services from their areas are acceptable to the customer. A smaller, less hierarchical and bureaucratic organisation can respond more quickly to the needs of the customer. 'Lean Manufacturing' ensures that valuable resources like materials, machinery and people are not wasted. If you do the job 'right the first time', rework will not occur, which will result in less waste and increased efficiency in the organisation. This means an organisation can keep its costs down and provide a cheaper product for the customer. 'Just in Time Production' enables a manufacturing organisation to have the right part at the right place in the right time, which increases the organisation's efficiency, enabling a quick response to the needs of the customer.

Fast capitalist texts create the concept of a new workforce and new social practices for the workforce. This workforce is 'knowledge-based' and 'empowered to make decisions about the needs and concerns of their customers'. People work in teams and are multi-skilled. This includes taking on tasks that were previously part of middle management, like recording production numbers and doing quality checks. New social identities are being created by fast capitalism: production workers are team members, supervisors become team leaders, and senior management become leaders. These new social identities create new Discourses too.

Constructing a fast capitalist Discourse for first line managers

In Fordist notions of old capitalism (Cope and Kalantzis 1997, p 28), first line managers were traditionally 'Supervisors'. A Supervisor was like a sergeant in the army, conveying orders about how many products were to be produced and not giving a damn about who produced them or the quality of their production (Clegg and Palmer 1996, p 2). In the new work order of fast capitalism, a 'Supervisor' becomes a 'Team Leader' who uses interpersonal skills to help the team achieve their goals, which include producing the best quality goods and services with no injuries. The construction of a fast capitalist Discourse for first line managers in Australia originated with the *Karpin Report*.

First line managers changing role

The *Karpin Report* was the first detailed Australian study into the roles and skills needed by Australian managers to continue propelling Australian industry into the post-Fordist restructured area of the 'new work order' of fast capitalism. Important to the construction of a fast capitalist Discourse of first line managers is the research conducted by Sheldrake and Saul in their chapter of the *Karpin Report*. They studied the changing role and skill needs of first line managers in 19 Australian organisations by interviewing senior managers and getting first line managers to fill out a questionnaire. They noted:

> The role of First line Managers has shifted from 'cop to coach'. The major responsibilities of today's First line Managers relate to planning the work of teams to satisfy its customers, adhere to corporate values, and meet qualitative and quantitative performance targets allocating tasks and motivating and training team members to give their best. (Sheldrake and Saul 1995, p 667)

The evidence and insights gained by Sheldrake and Saul's (1995) research provided me with a starting point to view the construction of a fast capitalist Discourse of first line management.

The skills and knowledge first line managers need to fulfil their new role in a fast capitalist workplace

Sheldrake and Saul went on to summarise the skill competencies that first line managers need to fulfil their changing roles

> ... there has been a significant increase in the importance of leadership, communication, interpersonal and learning competencies as First line Managers must establish, explain and win team members' commitment to objectives and priorities, more actively deal with conflict and poor performance, consult with clients and other teams and cope with a wide variety of new demands often requiring that new skills be learned quickly. They must be proactive and resourceful problem solvers with the persistence to follow through to make solutions. (Sheldrake and Saul 1995, p 667)

The key features embedded in Sheldrake and Saul's findings describe the Discourse of fast capitalism. This Discourse focuses on flexibility, change and innovation at all levels of the organisation (Gee et al, p 56). 'Flexibility' means people are required to do multiple tasks in their jobs - the catch phrase is 'multi-skilled'. 'Change' means handling changing priorities and objectives in an organisation to respond to the needs of the customer. 'Innovation' means being able to creatively solve problems that affect quality and efficiency in the organisation.

Sheldrake and Saul went on to identify that the major obstacle to effective organisational change expressed by senior managers and first line managers related to 'the lack of understanding of the need for change and the way in which various components of change were intended to interrelate to produce a new more successful organisation' (Sheldrake and Saul 1995, p 668).

First line managers viewed change as ad hoc, unsystematic and not within their control - and they were not prepared for it. They were not identifying with the organisational social practice of fast capitalist Discourse imposed on them and their work team by senior management. This dilemma is not unusual in the new work order.

In order to overcome this problem, Sheldrake and Saul advocated that the development of first line managers should be an ongoing process that is integrated with the strategic planning and change of the individual organisation. In others words, consistent development of first line management skills needs to be part of the continued re-engineering process within the organisation. This process could be ensured if senior management were more directly involved with the training and development of first line managers. This is a strategy to create the seamless organisation, where common goals and values about the organisation are held by its members.

Sheldrake and Saul went on to recommend

> ... emphasis in skill acquisition should be on developing a flexible set of learning modules that can be readily tailored to the needs of the individual industries, organisations and types of First line Managers. (Sheldrake and Saul 1995, p 670)

The Frontline Management Initiative (FMI) was born from the *Karpin Report*. FMI promotes the training of first line managers through workplace learning methodology. First line managers would be coached and mentored into the visions and missions of the organisation by senior management. They would participate in the direction of organisational change through action learning sets. In the Discourse of fast capitalism, this methodology is contributing to the replication of the seamless organisation, with 'shared values', 'common sense of direction' (Cope and Kalantzis 1997, p 122), and the creation of a learning community. The FMI may provide the model for the transformation of management in an organisation into responsive members of the fast capitalist, globally competitive new work order. The reality can be different. Workplace learning methodology requires time and an open-ended structure. These are commodities which are difficult to obtain in the ever changing dynamic, lean workplace. First line management training has been outsourced.

The Discourse of fast capitalism seeks to create and sustain social identities tied to distinctive ways of thinking, interacting and valuing. Sheldrake and Saul identified the fast capitalist Discourse of first line management through identifying the new roles (social identities) and skills (social practices) required. Workplace learning methodology is a mechanism which can replicate the organisational culture and is an important part of the Discourse. Mentoring and coaching by senior management would ensure that first line managers become 'people like us' within the organisation. Workplace learning has been promoted by both State and Federal governments and management schools. However, as Gee et al (1996, p 56) state '... in the case of any Discourse we can make a distinction between the espoused goals and what is emerging in practice'.

Data for this structure (methodology)

The evidence for this research is essentially qualitative and gathered from June 2000 to December 2000. It is drawn from extensive, formal and informal discussions with colleagues at Workplace Education Service, my own workplace practice, and trainee first line managers in three sites covering manufacturing and community services. A 'trainee', in an industry context, is a person who is learning a new set of skills and knowledge (competencies) which is linked to a formal qualification. Until December 2000 the Federal government allowed organisations to access traineeship financial incentives for existing employees. Many organisations embarked on traineeships to access formal qualifications and develop the management skills of their current first line managers.

In order to access first line managers' opinions from a cross-section of workplaces, I used these three broad questions. These questions were used as springboards for discussions on training and first line management.

1. What kind of training would be helpful for you in the workplace?
2. How will it help you in your job?
3. What will be different as a result of the training?

I used this information to identify the social practices that first line managers construct in forming their own social identities in the Discourse of first line management. Sheldrake and Saul (1995) provided me with a starting point to view the construction of a fast capitalist Discourse of first line management. Their evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, is crucial in identifying the dichotomy between what is supposed to happen and what is actually happening in the Discourse of first line management.

The social position of first line managers within the Discourse of fast capitalism

The organisational fast capitalist Discourse is constructed by senior management within the organisation. In this Discourse the shopfloor or work area is seen as part of the organisational Discourse, not a separate community of practice (Gee 2000, p 6). The construction of this Discourse does not acknowledge the social structure of the work area and the social practices a first line manager engages in order to enact her/his power and knowledge. First line managers' power and knowledge in both Discourses is constructed through their social identities on the shopfloor. In this study, a first line manager identifies the knowledge of work practices that are needed in their job:

'You've got to keep the bosses off your back'.

In other words: do the tasks that you are required to do, so senior and production management will not complain. However, this view does not acknowledge the social identity and practices first line managers have within their own work areas. They are the key holders of power and knowledge about their section, through the allocation of tasks and being the interface with senior management and production. They can be viewed as knowledge filters to their work teams (Gee et al 1996, p 38). Their power is based on the social practices and constructs of the shopfloor. First line managers' social identities on the shopfloor construct their social identities within the Discourse of management. The social constructs of the Discourse of first line management straddles two Discourses: the Discourse of the shopfloor and the Discourse of management within an organisation. They are the interface between senior managers and the shopfloor. First line managers can be acted upon to get people in their work groups to comply with the organisation's direction, like the requirements of 'Total Quality Control' or 'Just in Time'. The data collected in this study suggests first line managers' current social practice in the Discourse of the work area is determined by the following themes:

1. Downsizing and the casualisation of the workforce;
2. Compliance to government legislation; and
3. Satisfying the productivity outcomes of the organisation.

The following discussion captures these three trends in the context of a shifting framework for workplace learning, which has been articulated by Sheldrake and Saul. The point of this research is to show how conditions for training have changed over the last five to eight years.

1. Downsizing

In sites covered by this research, the impact of organisational downsizing and casualisation has had the most dramatic impact on first line managers. Downsizing is not the overt dismissing of groups of workers as happened in the Fordist notions of industry. Downsizing is achieved through natural attrition and not replacing workers who leave an organisation with permanent employees. A number of the first line managers taking part in this study observed that when an older, experienced worker retired from the organisation he/she was replaced by casuals. Downsizing and the casualisation of the workforce on the shopfloor has brought about the most dramatic changes to the social practices of first line managers since Sheldrake and Saul did their study. Their research was completed in the early 1990s. What is striking about the first line managers they questioned is that the majority of teams these first line managers lead were stable and permanent. Downsizing was from the ranks of middle management, not the shopfloor (Sheldrake and Saul 1995, p 694). Middle management downsizing fits into the Discourse of fast capitalism with smaller, less bureaucratic organisations being more responsive to the needs of their customers. Workers in teams can take on these previous middle management tasks; ie learn more skills, and through becoming multiskilled, be empowered to make decisions in the organisation. However, downsizing and the increased casualisation of the workforce undermine fast capitalist notions of teams and multiskilling of the workforce. The casual worker is hired for the shift to fulfil a production need and is assumed to have the skills that are needed to perform the tasks required of them. The concept of skill 'decomposes' jobs into discrete components, without contextual reference to the work area.

The skilled worker appears to be one who can move freely between settings carrying his or her skills like much luggage, and transferring those skills effortlessly into new contexts (Darrah 1997, p 252).

The assumption here is that if a worker has a particular set of skills, he/she can do the job. For example, if you can weld, you can weld in any factory environment. This view does not take into account the context of shopfloor and the particular social practices and social identities created by every different shopfloor environment . The first line managers in manufacturing industries taking part in this research felt the impact of casual workers over the last five years. The topic of 'casuals in the workplace' brought about heated discussions in training groups, because casual workers had to be trained to do the job. A common theme was expressed by a first line manager

> You can't assume anything. Even if they have the skills you still have to show them what to do.

Each shopfloor is a unique community of practice. A casual welder has to learn the social practices of each new shopfloor environment. Some of these social practices include customers' specifications for a particular task, safety hazards unique to the shopfloor or to the task, and 'Who do I need to notify if the equipment does not work'? The first line manager is in charge of the new shopfloor community of practice in which the casual worker participates. The first line manager has to make sure that the casual worker complies to the

social practices created by the shopfloor. As one first line manager in a manufacturing site remarked on the topic of casual workers:

> You train a guy up one day and you don't know if you are going to get him back the next. If you don't get him back you've got to train yet another new bloke. It doesn't matter if they can already weld you've got to make sure they can do the job you want them to do. Besides each machine is different.

The increased casualisation of the shopfloor workforce has highlighted the need for first line managers to know legislation.

2. Government legislation

The casualisation of the workforce has increased the demand on first line managers to be familiar with OHS&W legislation, Equal Opportunity legislation and the Workplace Relations Act. Compliance to government legislation plays an important part in the dichotomy of the new work order of fast capitalism and traditional work practice. Government legislation promotes Fordist organisation of the power knowledge relationships in an organisation. The role of a first line manager is one of a 'cop' - to use Sheldrake and Saul's analogy. The legislative structure forces social relations and social interactions in the work area. The first line manager becomes legally responsible for social practices.

This dichotomy can be illustrated by looking at part 19, section 3 of the South Australian OHS&W legislation, which refers to the duties of employers and their responsibilities to managers and supervisors. A supervisor in this context is a first line manager.

> An employer shall as far as reasonably practical ensure that any manager or supervisor is provided with such information, instruction and training as necessary to ensure that each employee under his or her management or supervision is while at work so far as reasonably practicable safe from injury and risks to health and monitor working conditions at any workplace that is under the management and control of the employer. (OHS&W Act 1986)

First line managers have responsibilities as outlined in Section 1.3.5 of the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Consolidated Regulations (second edition, 2000). They have to demonstrate the following:

- make sure they know where their employees are at all times
- encourage employees to report workplace accident and hazards
- pass on information to maintenance about unsafe or damaged equipment
- find adequate tasks for workers returning to work in their section
- ensure that workers are allocated tasks that they are trained to do.

(OHS&W Consolidated Regulations 2000, second edition, Part 1, Division 1.3.6)

The context of this knowledge is the first line manager's team and the production environment. The power first line managers have is the ability to pass on OHS&W knowledge about their team and the production environment to senior management, and conversely pass on OHS&W and production information from senior management to their team. They are performing their traditional role in a linear organisation. This role is reinforced by the OHS&W legislation through legal penalties. In the Discourse of fast capitalism, the creation of a team environment would allow for first line management power and knowledge about OHS&W to be devolved to the team. After all, team members know

their equipment and can perform the skills needed to complete the tasks. However, the concept of a team environment requires a stable, permanent workforce; the devolution of first line management power and knowledge to teams is not possible if the team's membership is constantly changing. The contextual knowledge and power of the workplace environment remains with the first line manager. This contextual knowledge can be as simple as knowing who is the most reliable member of the maintenance crew to get the job done.

3. Satisfying the productivity outcomes of the organisation

Sheldrake and Saul (1995, p 677) identified that the major concern for first line managers was measuring production units or getting the product out the door. Getting the right product out the door, with no reworks, is still the major concern. This is how their performance is measured, ie whether they can organise their team to produce what is needed, when it is needed, the first time. The assumptions are that the first line manager's team has the necessary skills to do the tasks and knows the standards expected. In the fast capitalist Discourse, getting the product out the door with no reworks is a team responsibility. The team members share the vision and mission of the organisation, and producing a quality product the first time is part of the collective vision for the organisation. The reality is that workers in teams may do the tasks of checking the quality of the product and delivering the right number of parts, but the responsibility for organising and making sure it is achieved is that of the first line manager. This responsibility has become more important with the casualisation of the workforce. Again, the first line manager has to take responsibility for making sure casual workers produce the right part at the right time to the right standard, through making sure that those workers are trained to do the task to the organisation's standards.

Training of first line managers or the creation of first line managers' social identities

Governments since the 1980s have given organisations incentives to become part of fast capitalism. This was initially done through: Award Restructuring; more recently, the Workplace Relations Act; and through the various evolutions of the Training Reform Agenda. The need for management training became the catchcry of government and industry bodies in the mid- to late-1990s, just as Award Restructuring and worker training was the catchcry of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Training can be viewed as an important part of redesigning and creating a new workplace culture and helping to establish new identities for its participants in the Discourse of the new work order (Castleton 1999, p 13). It can also be seen as reinforcing power and knowledge identities and relationships within organisations.

In South Australia many organisations were attracted to first line management training through a government incentive, a traineeship. This traineeship used the TAFE Certificate IV First Line Management. The Certificate IV is a basic management certificate aimed at the old Fordist-style supervisor (Cope 70). This Certificate became a traineeship at the request of an organisation. The organisation wanted their first line managers to receive training, but did not have the time or structure to implement workplace learning methodology. The Certificate IV in First Line Management provides these trainees with a management qualification in a traditional lock-step approach.

Training reinforces the knowledge and power relationships between senior management and first line managers. Senior management can select who participates in the training and contribute to the content of the course. They can shape 'the people like us in the organisation'. However, the training allows first line managers from the same organisation to define their own identities in relation to the Discourse of first line management by sharing social practices. How do first line managers define themselves in relation to the training they are currently doing? Is it any different from what Sheldrake and Saul identified as the skills they require?

Creating a social identity of first line management through training

At the beginning of this paper, I argued that language and literacy had to be viewed as social practice in a Discourse. Training is an important part of designing and creating social identities by giving participants access to knowledge of social practice. It can empower participants to define their own social identities within a Discourse, by enabling them to identity the social practices they need to resist or comply with in the Discourse. In other words, training can give the participants the opportunity to identify literacies they need to operate in the Discourse. This view of literacy seeks to empower participants. The following is a lists of what 35 trainee first line managers define as social practices of first line managers. I have not quantified the responses, and they are in a random order of importance:

- Computer or IT skills - this was seen as important to access the paper work and future career options.

- Personal communication skills - this was seen as an important part of dealing with senior management and with fellow workers. These skills ranged from public speaking skills and assertiveness to motivating people. (I believe these views reflect the position first line managers have in the current Discourse of fast capitalism; they straddle the organisation and the shopfloor Discourses.)

- Time management, allocating tasks and resource priorities.

- Political awareness within an organisation - the fear of the new kid on the block amongst the old guard managers.

- Problem solving and understanding company systems. (I found it interesting that these two social practices were always grouped together by the first line managers.)

- Study skills - to access more management training. (I see this as acquiring knowledge of management social practice from outside the organisation.)

Fast capitalist social practices in first line management training

Sheldrake and Saul (1995, p 667) identified the following competencies that first line managers need to fulfil their changing role:

- leadership
- interpersonal communication
- dealing with conflict and poor performance
- explaining and winning teams' commitment to objectives and priorities
- proactive and resourceful problem-solving.

These social practices are similar to the social practices I have identified; they are the social practices of the shopfloor. The first line manager's power and knowledge of the shopfloor could be used to get workers to comply with the Discourse of fast capitalism. However, social practices are also defined by the social structure and context of the Discourse. Sheldrake and Saul defined the social practices of the Discourse of first line management where the social structure was constant; a 'Supervisor' could be totally transformed into a 'Team Leader' through workplace learning methodology by senior management, to create the 'seamless organisation'.

The Discourse of first line management in 2001 (findings of my research)

The current Discourse of the shopfloor is determined by:

- Downsizing and the casualisation of the shopfloor
- Compliance to government legislation
- Satisfying the production outcomes of the organisation.

The 'team environment' of the Discourse of fast capitalism is not a reality on the shopfloor. The transformation of the first line manager from 'cop' to 'coach' is restrained by the current constructs of the shopfloor.

Implications of this research

This research offers a broader definition of literacy for educators in the field. It also gives educators and trainers in the field of management food for thought on the construction of first line managers' social identities through social practice. I use the concept of management literacies.

The new Business Services Training Package will be launched in 2002. First line management and frontline management will be incorporated. Will there be opportunities for first line managers to identify their training needs within the package? Will the training being offered by Registered Training Organisations using this Training Package be flexible to accommodate the social practice needs of first line managers in different organisations? This could include short courses linked to the Certificate and the context of the workplace - eg time management - as well as longer, research-based courses that involve senior management too.

I see the opportunity for further research in the context of the 'shopfloor'. In particular:

- Investigation of the impact of a casual workforce on the shopfloor and the 'concept of generic skills'. These are interesting ideas, particularly in relation to Training Packages.

- What follows 'change'? The concept of organisational change has been part of government policy and organisations rhetoric for at least 10 years. It is very important in the Discourse of fast capitalism. Is change stopping, changing direction? Is it good for us? How do we know what has changed?

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